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GENEVA COLLEGE,

ON THE

First of August, 1843.

BY HON. RICHARD D. DAVIS.

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GENEVA COLLEGE, August 1, 1843.

HON. RICHARD D. DAVIS :

Sir—At a meeting of the Alpha Phi Delta and Euglossian Societies, the undersigned were appointed a committee to tender you the thanks of their respective associations for the very interesting and instructive address which you have this day delivered before them, and to request a copy of the same for publication.

We have the honor to be, sir,

Your obedient servants,

N. ROCHESTER,
RUSSELL MARTIN,
E. R. STODDARD,
CHARLES WOODWARD,
CALVIN HUSON, JR.,
J. G. TREADWAY.

MESSRS. N. ROCHESTER, RUSSELL MARTIN,
E. R. STODDARD, CHAS. WOODWARD,
CALVIN HUSON, JR., and J. G. TREADWAY, } *Committee, &c.*

Gentlemen—I am duly sensible of the approbation which your Societies express for the address which I had the honor to deliver before them; and as I am not conscious of having uttered in it any feeling or sentiment which I did not believe to be true and think to be useful, it would ill become me to deny its publication. Allow me, gentlemen, to add, that I have been most agreeably surprised to find the Institution to which you belong, so well deserving a higher reputation and wider patronage—my conviction that it will soon enjoy both—and my best wishes for your individual success in your Collegiate course and after lives.

Very respectfully yours, &c.,

RICHARD D. DAVIS.

Geneva, 4th August, 1843.

ADDRESS.

I stand here to address two Societies, formed by the Students of Geneva College: It is the first time that I have ventured to occupy such a position. Much and long did I hesitate to assume it; for the business and habits of my life had led me far and forgetfully wandering from these occasions, and the topics most appropriate to them. Still I remembered, that, like these young men, I once was, as they are, the student of a College, and that like me, soon will they be as I am, beyond all of youth but the memory of its scenes, and mingling in the world of manhood.

This relation between us seemed to awaken within me an interest in them, and to establish on their part, some right to such humble services as I could render them. I remembered, too, that like the rich and glorious region around it, this Institution was but opening its energies in youthful effort, upon that long career of usefulness and reputation, which we trust will be its history.

I thought, that coming from a distant residence, to participate in the exercises of this day, would evince that natural and proper sympathy in the welfare of *our West*, which none can feel more sensibly than I do; and that I might here present my offering and testimony, to cement and strengthen those ties of interest and patriotism, which do and for ever should pervade and encircle every portion of the people of our own Empire State.

Without the science or literature to enrich (for such an audience) whatever I should say, I still fancied that even

an address from me might do some good, if it developed in the plainest manner, that interest and connection, which all may have in Institutions such as this—if it traced in the faintest lines, those benefits which can flow from such fountains, upon the broad surface of the community around them; and if in any way it illustrated how the higher grades of education, may be made useful to the general welfare, to individual freedom, and to the great cause of human progress.

And above all, I felt that my own deficiencies might be held up to those who hear me, to animate them to a better career than I have run, to a more illustrious course, and to a higher range and reach in those attainments to which they have, as I did, now dedicated their lives. Thus reflecting, I have come here to offer you a few thoughts on the design of education, and the duty of educated men, in our age and country.

The young men before me, enjoy peculiar and remarkable advantages; high above those possessed by the great mass of their fellow beings. It is of itself great good fortune, to be entering upon manhood at this time, in this country; but *that* they share, in common with all others of their own years.

For a moment let us turn our attention to the eminent and exclusive privileges, which distinguish the few, who, like yourselves, hold positions in life which are denied to most young men, not only elsewhere, but even in your own land.

How very few of the young men of our country, either do or can have the benefits and blessings which you enjoy. Not one of you, but has left at home behind him scores of relatives and neighbors, to whom these advantages would

have been as valuable and as highly valued. The smiles of fortune, the affluence and favor of friends, or your own more meritorious exertions have placed you within the walls of a College, and devoted your days and nights to the cultivation of your moral and intellectual faculties. To you, science unfolds her mysteries, and literature proffers freely all her pleasures. From the multitude of your fellows, your fellows in years, and your fellows in natural and moral endowment, these things are mostly, if not entirely withheld; and here in this peaceful and beautiful retreat, protected by the laws and honored by the community, you pursue your path of pleasantness, and walk the ways of wisdom, surrounded by privileges and opportunities, facilities and aids, which provoke industry, and reward its efforts. A thousand favoring influences impel you forward, in your career. Public munificence, and popular approbation, evolve successive contributions in your behalf, and even the dull sluggard warms at his work, as he remembers the fond mother and proud father, whose prayers would invoke heaven's blessing on his progress. You seem to be and you are the favorites of fortune, for even envy does not scowl upon you with her malignant eye, and all things combine to sustain and uphold, to cheer and encourage you in these prerogatives, which do indeed constitute and characterize you as a select and privileged order of the people, a chosen class elevated above the rest, and endowed with large immunities, and special enjoyments.

Now why is all this? Why are these young men thus blessed by heaven, and favored of man? Why, my young friends, are you, as I was, selected or permitted to enjoy these things which are denied to so many others, who de-

serve them full as much as we do, and who perhaps would far better improve them? Why were we taken from the multitude around us, and placed where we thus flourish above and beyond our fellow men? What have we done, or what can we do more than others, to entitle us to these advantages? How and why is it, that we so few in number, are thus pre-eminent in all the enjoyments of life, and thus peacefully possess, what so many others so eagerly and ardently desire? Do you answer me that it is because, under the goodness of God, your friends or your own efforts, have furnished you the means to purchase these peculiar and exclusive privileges. Let me then ask why even that is allowed, and you permitted to make that purchase? Nay, why are you tolerated in enjoyments which others cannot obtain? No, no, that is not the true explanation and vindication of these arrangements of the world. The humblest of mortals, the most abject of the wretched, the lowest of the degraded, is as much an object of regard in the eye of nature, reason and religion, as an angel or a seraph, for he breathes by the inspiration of his Maker, the breath of life; and the immortality of hereafter is his.

But again. Why do the ninety and nine out of every hundred, who can by no possibility have these things, allow us to have them? Surely, they have the power, and was there not some good reason against it, as surely they would have the right to prohibit any one individual from receiving more of this world's advantages, than can be had by all the others. Who or what could prevent a community from making all things equal, that can be equalized, or at least from devoting all that each has, or can acquire, to the common use of the whole? If it would

be best, then it would be right to render all things into one common fund, from which all should share alike. And why it is not best, must afford the same and the only true answer, for the advantages you are allowed over other men.

Human happiness is the great object of human existence, and the only true end, to which we can devote the powers of the human race. To promote and secure it, instinct, reason and revelation, conspire in confederated effort, and common cause. For it men found society, establish government, institute property, ordain customs, usages and habits, regulate business, intercourse, and education, and arrange all the vast and complex machinery of civil, social and individual life. Now what happiness is it, which is thus sought to be produced, and for whose welfare are these things contrived and executed? Is it for the happiness of one, or of all? For the welfare of a part, or of the whole? Is it for me, or for you, or for any other individual, or for any class of individuals, that this great globe, and its myriad population, move and have their being? Oh no! it is not; but it is for us all, as one mighty whole. For the great aggregate of humanity, in generations past, present, and to come. As individuals, we are nothing, and less than nothing. It is only as members of the human family, that we are any thing, or can be any thing, or can have any thing. I am nothing and you are nothing, but as we are bound and belong to others, and it is for their sake, and not ours, that we are what we are, and have all that we enjoy. It is not our individuality, but one membership, and fellowship with others, which originates and supports all our rights, claims, and powers. It is not we, ourselves, but these others, who

clothe us with all our enjoyments, and it is because we are of them, and part of them, and upheld by them, that we are not utterly insignificant, useless and valueless. The individual is nothing, and he only rises into importance as he expands his relations in the family, the society, the community, the nation, the generation, and last and highest of all, in his being one of the human race, and having a common lot in its weal and woe.

These views are beginning to spread abroad in the world, and the rights and duties of individuals, are almost every where come to be considered as secondary and subordinate to the interests of the community to which they belong. *Wealth* and *labor*, the foundation and equity of all property in them, and the principle of all private appropriation and accumulation, are now commonly conceded to rest on no other basis of right and justice than that which makes them most conducive to the general good. The right of a community to all that each one of its members can do for the common and general welfare, is become an admitted principle, and the laws and institutions of society, are right or wrong as they tend to fulfil or defeat that overruling object. Labor and property have no existence in society, but as they are developed and manifested, maintained and modified by human law; and that law can have no soundness and no sanction, but as it promotes the general good, and works out the welfare of the whole, by its action on the individuals whom it affects and influences. Private property and all individual appropriation are right, and ought only to be permitted, because under wise regulations they lead to greater industry, and thus to greater general aggregate accumulation. It is the application of these principles, which is working the large

and liberal reforms of the world, and which is elevating the condition of the mass of mankind, by securing to their service and advantage the fruits of their own industry.

I have introduced this topic for two reasons : First, that I might give my passing reprobation, upon that modern socialism, which seeks to pervert these principles, beyond the bounds and against the instincts of nature, and to work out a theory hostile to the best relations of life, and thus to overthrow the principles themselves, in the monstrous consequences which are deduced from them, as they would do, who would so change the organization of society, as to sink the individual and the family into those mushroom associations, whose outrageous absurdity exempts them from any severer censure, than that of idle follies.

My other reason was, to enable me to show to you, that your great and peculiar advantages rest on the same foundation as do all other advantages, which are allowed to others. Your education and elevation in society are indulged and permitted on the same principle as are all other individual aggrandizement and acquisition, and for the same cause are you encouraged to improve your minds that other men are to improve their estates. The faculties of the mind are as much the rightful property of the whole community as the sinews of the body, and men are educated not for the good it will do to themselves but to others. It is only because the greater amount of general good flows from individual property, that all property is not and ought not to be held in common, and it is on that ground alone that mental cultivation is sanctioned in any one beyond what all could share in. Providence proposes happiness here and hereafter as the reward of piety and virtue, and at the same time entwines these motives around

the welfare of the universe as its chief and greatest glory. Society seeking how it may best promote the prosperity of all, enlists the selfishness of the heart in aid of the general good, and under wise modifications swells the universal aggregate of acquisition by those incentives which each feels and follows as he struggles for his individual advancement. The good of all, therefore, and not your good is the reason and the right of your allowance to acquire your education. Your own happiness, honor or glory, your personal elevation and improvement are not the considerations which place you here and confer upon you this superiority of condition. It is not on your own account, but for the sake of others, and because it is best for them and not for you. You may come here for your own sake, or for any motive that you please to pursue ; but we, the rest of the world, permit you to come, because we think it best for us, not for you, to have these advantages, or we would not allow it. We sanction, we sustain you here in order that your high improvement in moral and intellectual culture may diffuse a wider influence and larger service over the great interests of the whole.

The proud farmer who stands on his own soil, won by his own industry, feels no doubt that it is all his own, and that he can use it or abuse it at his pleasure ; and so he can by the law but not by morals, not by principle, nor yet by the spirit of that law which permits him to do it.— That law was made to encourage him to get his farm ; to use it as it should be used ; to make it most conducive to the greatest good. If he be a thoughtful and honest man, he will feel and obey this duty, for he will know that he has no right or title to his estate, but under the law and by the law whose trustee he is, to employ it in such way

as will most contribute to the general welfare. So too, of the educated man ; however great his faculties and attainments, he holds them for the good of all. God gave them, that man might have the benefit of them, and society has a right to their most beneficial employment. The obligation of all men to society at large are perpetual and immoveable, overruling and paramount. We are prone to forget them and to feel that society owes us far more than we can be indebted to it. Intellectual endowment seems to be so directly heaven-bestowed, and intellectual attainment to come from so few sources around us, that talented and educated men are apt to overlook and disregard the claims which the community has upon them.— But there can be no real distinction between the obligations to employ intellectual and material faculties and attainments for the general weal ; one as much as the other belongs to all, and both are permitted to be used for individual purposes, because that most promotes the welfare of all. One of the reasons why your parents were allowed to acquire private estates, was that their solicitude for you might prompt them to greater exertions for the means to send and maintain you here, that by the education you might thus receive, you might be of more use in the world, and fulfil a larger duty to others.

In the views we have thus considered we may discover the legitimate principle and purpose of education : We may learn by what standard to estimate its character ; the philosophy of its rights, powers and pretensions ; the scope of its appropriate influence, and the nature and manner of its action on the great interests of mankind in that vast futurity of improvement, which we believe that it can be made to accomplish. Contemplated in this light

how differently appears not only education, but wealth, power and all the institutions and arrangements of the world from that usual estimation in which for so many ages they have been regarded, and thus understood, all history seems to be a dream or a fiction too improbable to be real, too absurd to be true. Until recently that great principle, the general good, seems to have been unknown and unregarded, and government and society almost exclusively constituted and conducted for the few, and not the many.

The whole action of human affairs has moved under culminating tendencies as if all things sought the formation and elevation of leaders and the depression of the masses ; the lifting up of privileged orders and the humiliation of the great body of mankind, rendering them tributary to and dependent on the limited number thus raised above them. Looking at the past, one almost fancies that millions have lived and toiled and suffered to sustain thousands, and had no other object or purpose in their being ; that this world had been made peopled, and continued for the senseless and monstrous business of supporting in it this small and insignificant number of its inhabitants, who occupied all its pleasant places, engrossed all its honors, and consumed all its richness and enjoyments. It was not strange, that in such periods, men supposed that education and all intellectual advancement were especially and exclusively intended for the benefit of the few. Indeed, that small portion of our race who usually denominate themselves the higher orders or better classes of society, have had pretty much all to say in this world ; they figure in its history, monopolize its fame, possess its property, control its action, rule in its government, regu-

late its institutions, and generally have contrived to extract from the many millions below them, all that could be made to minister to their own possessions, powers, privileges and pleasures.

But, thank God, this is so no longer. The Saviour has been upon the earth. He came to give temporal as well as eternal happiness. He spoke as man never spake before, for he brought the wisdom of heaven to rule in the affairs of earth. He brought to light not only immortality, but life: the life that we now live and all that appertains to it. Those sublime and heaven-born precepts, to do unto others as ye would they should do unto you, and to love your neighbor as yourself, difficult and hard as they are to be obeyed, have already changed the whole aspect and action of human affairs. They have already wrought more miracles in the moral world than are recorded in the Scriptures, or chronicled in the church, and they will go on conquering and to conquer, until consummated in the last and final glory of our race. To whom did this Saviour come? He came to no class, no sect, no kindred, no nation, and no generation of men. But he came to all and for all, to you and to me, to every one, to every age and country and clime. He came not to kings, not to princes, not to privileged orders, but to the people. He was cradled in a manger, not in a palace. He had not where to lay his head, and he slept in the cottages of the poor; and with the widow and the orphan, with the publican and the sinner, he kept his company. He was the God of the people, of the whole people: God over all, blessed for ever.

Our land has been the first to inscribe these mighty and magnificent truths upon the broad banner of her social and political organization, and our age is almost the first that

has felt them moving on the wide waters of humanity. There was no true notion of the rights of man, no just or complete conception of human freedom and universal justice, until the Saviour proclaimed them. Freedom, equality, justice, benevolence, the mutual dependance of man on man, the reciprocal interest of all in each, and each in all, the rights of the poor, the privileges of the humble, the dignity and glory of our divine human nature, its right to the cultivation of its transcendent and immortal attributes, of its moral powers and intellectual faculties, the uplifting of man and of woman in their lowliest estate, bidding them to stand erect in the image and likeness of their God, and to look upwards from earth to heaven,—these, all these, now the theme of so many tongues and the hope of so many hearts, were unknown, or only seen through a glass darkly, until Christianity revealed them to the conception and understanding of the world.

Having thus contemplated the source and character of those principles in which we would look for the true object of education, namely, the good that it will due to others and not the educated themselves, except as they form a part of the whole, let us briefly consider a single objection which may be offered against our proposition. Some may object to this doctrine as too low, too humbling, too levelling: that it degrades the intellect and learning of the world from their high estate, and makes them tributary and subservient to the common mind of the community, the common sense of mankind. These views, they may say, will depress and discourage genius, and subject all the higher grades of intellect to the ordinary measure of mind, making their popular estimation such as to diminish their influence and authority over others. I

do not know that this will not be so, and for one I do not care if it is so. I have a profound respect for the plain, substantial, honest common sense of the world, and believe it to be the only safeguard and guide in private or public matters. Genius is often above or below this unassuming companion, and talent frequently runs a career brilliant in mischief and magnificent in disaster, splendidly ruinous, and gloriously frivolous. The men of genius and talent occasion nearly all the commotion and calamities of the world, and in our own community you cannot look into a circle which has not been more or less injured, if not wrecked, by its luminary. Too much deference has ever been awarded, not only to genius and talent, but to learning, wealth, rank, office, power, and all the ordinary distinctions of earth. We are eternally overrating the importance of these things, our obligations to them, and our dependence on them. The great men and great things of life are for ever enhancing themselves, seeking to exalt their own usefulness and consequence, and to undervalue the humble and common concerns of the world, and the people who are engaged in them. We can do very well without great men or great things, as men and things have been accounted great in most periods, and I am not one who would allow them half the sway and influence which they are so fain to insolently usurp and display; nor would I award them any value or any respect, but as they were instrumental in promoting the welfare and progress of the common people and common concerns of life. One good common citizen is worth an hundred great men, whether they be fops or fiddlers, fashionable gentlemen or learned fools, swindling operators or faithless politicians, bankrupt merchants or reckless adventurers.

Our country has adopted as its foundation and glory, that the common people, the mass of the community, are its masters, owners, and controllers, and that all its concerns are to be conducted for their benefit, and to afford them the greatest amount of human happiness. We believe that this world belongs to the people who are in it, to the whole people, and not to any class or part or portion of them. And above all things do I hold that this country belongs to the people in it, as much to the poor as to the rich, to the ignorant as the educated, and that its entire policy, usages and institutions, are to be created and conducted for the good of all, and that its talents and education are equally obedient and subservient to this same common authority of all over all.

The rich have no more authority over the property of the country than the poor, and they hold all that they have as much by the permission of the poor as by their own, and not by any power or right but that which the poor as much as themselves have bestowed upon them for the common good of the poor as well as rich. The educated have no right to education more than the ignorant, and they enjoy their education by the permission of the uneducated as much as by their own, and for the common good of all, the ignorant as well as the educated. If this service to all, this usefulness to all, this subordination to all, be to degrade education and talents, let them be degraded to the lowest depth, for then their depression is the elevation of humanity, and well fulfils the spirit and purpose of that religion from which we derive all our principles which are worth possessing. All men cannot be highly educated, but it is beneficial in the general result that some few should be, and hence you are educated, that you may sub-

serve that general result and promote that general good. I can see no other basis on which to place your pre-eminent advantages, and if this humbles your pride of intellect and the lofty arrogance of talent and learning, I can only say for one that I would bow them to the earth and bury them beneath it, to advance but one step in the elevation and happiness of the human kind.

To make men useful to their fellow men, is then the great design of education. What form and extent of it should be adopted, we will not here enquire, but leaving this branch of our theme, let me next turn your attention to some of the duties which devolve on you as educated men, in the present period and position of your country.

We have seen that Christianity has shed a new light on the duty and destiny of men in this world, as well as in the next. It has brought all classes and conditions to the same test and standard; that of utility to human happiness, and all the more elevated pursuits of life are subjected to the same judgment as the lowliest of human avocations. We judge the throned monarch by the same rule that we would apply to his humblest subject, and the prince and the pauper, the philosopher and the peasant, the ignorant and the learned, the rich and the poor, the mighty and the humble, all alike are bound by this law, and held submissive to its mandates. As men of education, you fall within this authority, and your duty is prescribed and illustrated by the precepts and examples which it has bestowed upon mankind. You cannot escape this doom, for the wide world is awaking to it, and every where men are beginning to account themselves to be men, and entitled to the rights of men. The glorious multitude of our race will not longer remain as they have been for ages past, but

instinct and burning with new thoughts and hopes and feelings and desires of better things, they have risen to seek for their long lost inheritance, and will not rest or pause until it shall be recovered.

The education of the world has thus far done but little for human happiness, in comparison with what it can and ought to be made to accomplish. The most careless observer sees at a glance that infinitely less than should be, is realized from the labor and intellect of the human race. It does not require one quarter of the time and toil of a people to procure a superabundant subsistence for the whole, and if well and wisely regulated and instructed, every community ought to afford to every competent and industrious citizen, a comfortable livelihood, and ample means and opportunity for moral and intellectual improvement and recreation. We see this, we feel this, when we look at any other people or any other period. It is only now and here, amidst our prejudices, habits and engagements, that we fear it cannot be attained. But much has been done; enough to encourage the faith that more can be, and the educated of the world should be, the advocates of that reformation which will achieve it. In all past times, nineteen-twentieths have labored, not for themselves, and to enlarge the circle of their own comfort and enjoyments, but for the other twentieth, to furnish them with ease and opulence, luxury and pleasure, while they themselves were destitute of half the necessities of life and shut out from moral and intellectual culture. Now this ought not so to be, and I trust in God that the time has come, that the day-spring from on high hath visited us, and that it cannot be so much longer. The institutions, customs, opinions, education and whole arrangement of society which pro-

duced such deplorable and disheartening results, must be wrong; radically, inherently wrong; and it must be right, morally, religiously, gloriously right, to go for their reform.

Until latterly, the world sat in dead despair of any considerable improvement of its condition. Amendment seemed hopeless: all things had been so, so long, that men feared they must remain so for ever. Christianity, which had revealed these better things and brighter hopes, which had imparted this new and nobler aim to human effort, was so slow and difficult in its advance, so often perverted to other and opposing purposes, that even its divine power seemed almost unequal to the reformation it had disclosed and promised to perform.—Nay, religion itself, was at times so interwoven and incorporated in the forms and modification of vicious institutions and opinions, as to lend them its sanction, and to resist the plainest reforms of society and the state, lest they should prove to be heresies in the church. Still less encouragement was to be found in the aid which the arts and sciences gave to disseminate the principles of christianity, and apply them to the affairs of men, for learning and talents had too often opposed all popular improvement, and sustained the worst systems of oppression and injustice. The institutions and mode of education of former periods, are not sufficiently favorable to the elevation and advancement of the mass of men, and to the diffusion amongst them of those blessings and advantages to which they are justly entitled. In our age and country, this matter requires the most enlightened consideration. Our colleges and seminaries of instruction, and the entire system of education, need an adaptation to the times, to the spirit of the age, to the genius of the country. They

must not be depositaries of the obsolete and rusty sentiments, doctrines and customs, of antecedent eras, but regenerated and relumined watch-towers, to enlighten and direct the onward progress of mankind. They must not foster and inculcate the morals and manners and opinions which were placed around the privileged orders and abuses of the earth, but show in their action and influence, how thoroughly they partake and feel the character and impulse of the present day. I regard it as the first duty of the educated men of America, to conform, accommodate and apply our institutions of education to the great and fundamental principles and policy of the country; to make them nurseries of American thought, feelings, action and manners, fit and fair, full and flowing fountains for freemen to drink from, from generation to generation.

Some men suppose that the whole system of education needs a thorough reform, and that more of the practical and every day duties and cares and character of life should be intermixed with the usual studies of the College. Undoubtedly much of what is learned has no real value for any practical purpose, except as it is an exercise of the faculties, and that is frequently more than counterbalanced by its frivolity and the vicious taste it engenders in the mind. Before those so much more competent to decide, I will not risk an opinion on such a subject; but this I will say, that education in this country must be modernized, humanized, republicanized, christianized. It must not in its higher departments be considered or cultivated as a substitute for all participation in the affairs of men, as an excuse for indifference to the common concerns of life, as an exemption from the usual responsibilities of the citizen, an apology for scholastic acerbity of manners and aristo-

cratic assumption over others, as a shield for licentiousness of conduct, and an absolution from the plain and homely virtues of ordinary life. Such tendencies have too much marked it in every age, and we need a double vigilance against them. It is the nature of education as it is of wealth, power, business and manners, and indeed of all the distinctions of the world, as society grows older, to run into these exclusive and aristocratic tendencies, and to separate the favorites of fortune widely, distantly, disdainfully, from the common privileges, pleasures, and pursuits of the people. We are bound to resist and overcome this ; to render our country broad, general, diffusive, equal, universal in its advantages ; to curtail all that is taken from the many for the benefit of the few, and to repress no less the presumption of education and the arrogance of attainment, than the pride of wealth and insolence of position. The aristocracy of talent and learning changes with almost every generation, and seldom lasts as long as the hereditary transmission of estates. The genius of to-day is to-morrow the parent of a fool, and the child of a philosopher is often the inmate of a prison, or some poor laborer brightening his dulled faculties in the hardships of poverty and toil, that his descendants thus renovated may renew the lustre of their lineage. It is to me one of the most pleasing contemplations of our country, that here and under our system families rise but to fall, and fall but to rise ; that races blend in Babel-like confusion and indistinguishable commixture. From the great bulk of our population are constantly emerging to eminence some few who flourish for a time and then in their descendants sink back again into the common mass, or often go down below it, and at the same time from that

mass are continually falling those who in their posterity, recuperate, and regain their pristine condition. The theory and principle of our community is to take care of this great mass, and to diminish these two extremes, to give to those above it no special advantages to sustain them there, and to impose on those below it no weight to keep them there. We have little solicitude or consideration for either extreme beyond what is necessary to prevent their injuring the great mass, and to facilitate their return to the common fold and fellowship of the whole.

The educated men of the United States, are under a peculiar and paramount responsibility to adapt and employ the talents and education of the country to the service of the human race, in conformity with our institutions and positions. We are making the great experiment of the world. Our progress, thus far, has wrought wonders over the face of the earth. It has created new views, opinions and thoughts, every where, and already men find new and strange elements at work in human affairs.—Among these, the power of public opinion is most conspicuous and remarkable. In our land and under our system, it is supreme and omnipotent. Educated men have most to do in its formation and regulation, and this constitutes their chief obligation to their fellow men. If they did not influence others, it would be of little consequence what they themselves might think, but acting on other minds, and imparting their own sentiments and views to all classes of society, they almost rule the moral world. The success or failure of this country in the great experiment of self-government, and in improving and equalizing the condition of its inhabitants, is now so far determined that we may say it is certain to succeed, if we but will

and act to accomplish it. We have gone so far, that all the world besides cannot defeat or disturb our progress, and if we do fail, it will be our own folly that will cause it. The faith and confidence and resolution of the people to carry on the work, is all that is wanting to ensure the conduct and policy that will complete it. Public opinion is the embodiment of that faith, confidence and resolution, and while that opinion is right, sound and firm, all is safe, and the great result is sure. Our educated men, we who have had these advantages, originate and regulate that opinion, and give to it all its pulsations, energy and tone. How important, therefore, is it, that such men should be thoroughly imbued with the temper of the times, the designs of the age, the principles of the country, the benevolence and charity which Christianity has infused into all the purposes of the period we live in. Under these views, an American citizen ought to feel that his responsibility is greatest among the sons of men, and looking forward to such momentous results, who will dare to despair of his country, or to withhold his efforts, in sunshine and in storm, from this, the common cause of our common kind.

There are those who think that education cannot do harm, that every advance in the arts and learning and refinement, can only be instrumental in diffusing human happiness; that individual intelligence only does good to the individual and all connected with him, and that the general cultivation of society but adds so much the more to its enjoyments and welfare. I do not hold this opinion, and to my mind the history of the world refutes it. A man may be intelligent and accomplished, at the expense of all his happiness, and a nation may be civilized, enriched and refined, at the ruin of its comfort and welfare.

Something more and better than art and science, learning and civilization, opulence and refinement, are alike indispensable to individual or national well-being ; neither of them has yet been or ever will be found without a sound moral sentiment, vigorous and substantial common habits and virtues, honest, equal and just purposes, and a generous industry, and unless they are associated and combined with these humble but more important traits, they are a misfortune rather than a blessing to the individual and to the community.

The civilization, intelligence and refinement of the world have been varying from age to age, and have existed in every degree, without much apparent connection with, or effect upon, the condition of the great body of mankind. Nor do the expanded philanthropy and general effort for human improvement which distinguish our era, originate or proceed from any superiority of intellectual attainment that we may assert over other periods. Our age boasts itself better than all that have gone before it. But there is much to warrant the belief that in former times, of which we know nothing save that they have been, all the arts of life, and the learning and civilization of the world, were more advanced than they now are, or perhaps ever will be again. Much of what we think new, may be the mere recovery of what was lost, and although we perceive that we surpass some antecedent periods, it is but too apparent, that in many of our boasted improvements, we are only progressing over a career long ago familiar and long ago forgotten. The discoveries of the last fifty years, indicate the former existence over the whole earth, of nations and races unknown to our history, and of arts that we know not enough of to comprehend what they were.

Our own continent is full of these vestiges of an unknown past, whose traces demonstrate a state of society most extraordinary and inexplicable by all our records and traditions. Similar results have followed researches in other quarters of the globe. But even in periods more known to us, it is certain that a civilization and intellectual advancement have existed equal to, if not exceeding our own, and surpassing all our trophies of art and science, elegance and refinement. We are not in all these things what others have been. The cities of other days, the public works, the perfection of the fine arts, the range of the sciences, and all the accomplishments of life, went far beyond our knowledge; and even in the means of subsistence, the ancients have sustained a population which our best agricultural, mechanical and commercial resources could not support.

And yet all this has happened time after time, without benefitting the great body of the people, or elevating their condition or improving their enjoyments, without making them freer, wiser, better or happier. The few only have enjoyed any good from them, and to the many they have been as if they were not, or worse. Evidently improvement in art and science ought to advance and augment the general happiness. We wonder that it has been so little beneficial to the many, and men sometimes doubt if an advanced state of society be in fact favorable to the true interests of mankind. At this day, in some countries, where the arts of life are most perfectly known and practised, and where science and religion burn and blaze with focal intensity, the condition of the great community of citizens grows only worse and worse, from year to year, as the nation increases in power, wealth, luxury, and re-

finement, and the people sink in their enjoyments as the empire rises in energy, greatness and grandeur.

This ought not to be the history of our country. It is the solemn and imperious duty of our educated men, to prevent it, and to reach a far different and better result in our futurity. We must send forward this nation under other auspices, and to another destiny. We have already started under them; we propose to accomplish the freedom, equality, elevation and enlightenment of the people as a whole, their general happiness and comfort, their enjoyment of more of bodily, intellectual and moral good, than has yet been known. This can be done, this must be done, but it can only be done by the enlightened, liberal and uniform agency and influence of the intelligent and elevated in society. They must come up to this work and transfuse into the civil and social progress of the people, the living spirit of this better being that we hope for — the transforming energy and potency that will convert all advancement into an instrument of good, to all that will arrest the tendency to aristocratic distinctions and oppressions, as society grows older and riper in the arts, in knowledge, in opulence and refinement. May we not fear that in much of our rapid progress, we have been too eager to enlarge our wealth and intelligence, our power and resources, our improvements and civilization, and too unmindful of the cultivation of those moral sentiments and feelings, those habits, manners and virtues, which alone can preserve and perpetuate our devotion to freedom, our general equality, and our common welfare. Be it your part and mine to acquit ourselves of this obligation, by resisting all things hostile to the rights, privileges, powers, and immunities of the people, which tend to the humilia-

tion of the humble and the elevation of the exalted, and so far as we can, to render the onward march of our community a triumphant and glorious fulfilment of its principles, its promises, and its hopes.

The political duties of the educated in this country, are of such obvious importance, that I shall be excused for adverting to them on this occasion. Many of you are aware that I am very much of a politician, and, it may be, too much of a partisan; but I know too well the proprieties of this place, to introduce at this time, any thing of a party character. Here, we have nothing to do with party, and what I shall say to you will be general, and as applicable to the one party as the other. In this country, we are, and must be, to more or less extent, universally politicians, and we are made so by the nature and character of our institutions. The forms of our government invest us with certain rights which cannot be enjoyed, and impose on us certain duties which cannot be discharged, without some participation in the politics around us. Every man holds in his hands a portion of the power of the State. It is conferred on him, not for his mere individual gratification, or honor or advantage, but for the benefit of his country, and he is bound to exercise it, bound to be a politician, bound to vote at every election, according to the convictions of his judgment and the dictates of his conscience. Believing these things, and urging them on your adoption, and assuming that you ought and are to be of one party or the other, permit me to present a few considerations that well deserve the attention of educated men in every party that we by any possibility can have. One of the most serious difficulties in our system, perhaps its veriest vice, is the impetuosity of its progress and that insatiate

propensity to perpetual excitement and change which it engenders in the popular mind. With us power rests and subsists on public opinion, and this makes every party anxious to secure to itself the influence of any present matter of general favor, to catch the popularity of the hour, to study for some new thing to captivate the popular feeling. Hence our people are incessantly besieged with new notions, fanciful reforms of imaginary or real abuses, visionary changes, chimerical measures, and a length and breadth, and height and depth of schemes for the public good which nothing could supply but an invention fired by the passion for place and power. A people thus assailed in every form and from every quarter, and who know that they have the ability to do or not to do as they please, are in some danger of becoming prone to act and fond of changes. In individual matters it would be dangerous, and in public affairs nothing can be more disastrous than too free and frequent fluctuations. The early age and boundless prosperity of the country, the ardor and enterprise of the national character, the daring and ready versatility of our pursuits, add to this peril and expose us to more than ordinary difficulties. We change too fast, too often, and too much. It is the pest of our legislation and a general infirmity of our people, in their business, politics, and society, fomenting and diffusing discontent, excitement, dissension and confusion in all classes and conditions of the community. The men of education should in their appropriate sphere and position, cast their weight into the opposite scale, and serve as the balancing power in our social and political machine. The restraint of such men on their own party is of excellent and efficient service, checking the impetuosity of popular

impulse, maturing and moderating political movements, assuaging the severity of party contests, and giving steadiness to the great progress of the country. In the political storm, when the winds and waves of public commotion threaten our national bark with shipwreck, then, in their respective parties, their counsel and their voice should be heard above the tempest, speaking for moderation, forbearance, conciliation, confidence and peace.

Allied to this duty is another of analagous, and, it may be, equal importance. The progress of society developes two great and conflicting influences struggling for mastery, in every community. They are the power of property and the power of persons, or as they are often designated, capital and labor, and between them, in all ages and countries and politics, has existed an unending contest, in which, however, wealth has usually prevailed. We have set our system in operation for a different destiny. We give no power to wealth but its moral influence, and we bestow on persons the entire authority of the State, irrespective of their possessions. The nature and instinct of property, is, to accumulate, to enlarge, to conglomerate and to influence, to this, its vital purpose, the business and concerns of the community. Wealth is power to a great extent, and for many uses, and it unerringly and inevitably insinuates its influence into the legislation, commerce, business, intercourse, society, and general action of the world. Although we have taken from it all legal and political authority—although we seek to diffuse and distribute it throughout the community in small, rather than large estates—although we have shorn it of many of its attributes, and give it no more than simple naked protection, still it is not to be denied or disguised, that the tendency of the

property of the country is invariably and inherently at work, to reduce and diminish the income, or wages or earnings of labor, down to the cheapest subsistence, in order that all not thus consumed, may enhance its own profits, may render its share large, and labors' share small, of the results of human industry. The steadfast, strong, subtle, silent action of wealth, its very function and essence fulfils the parable, that unto every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. We see this exemplified in our own national career. Already the increase of wealth in many cities and sections of the country, has rendered the transition from poverty to even a moderate competence, an impassable gulf, to much the larger portion of the people. Already the extravagance and style of general life, which the rich and fashionable foster into repute, and thus force into common use, exhausts all and more than most young men can acquire for themselves and families. Already the currents of aggregation have swollen beyond the proper bounds, and that recent calamitous expansion of the credit system was no more than an effort to establish upon a fiction and a sham, the artificial and unnatural concentration and consolidation of property in larger masses than its rightful owners could combine it; and even now, poor young men find it more and more difficult to commence their business, whether they be professional men, merchants, mechanics, or farmers. It is become harder to be poor, than it used to be, and it is harder to be poor than it ought to be.— These evils are incident to the existence of wealth in every form, and it cannot be without them to a greater or less degree. They cannot be eradicated, cannot be abolished,

but they may be resisted, reduced, alleviated, mitigated. You, as educated men, are bound to aid in this result. You, if you have caught the inspiration of that philanthropy which your education should teach you—if you have learned to look on man as your fellow being, and entitled to something more than the beggarly elements of toil, and poverty and humiliation, as a being to be improved on earth and fitted for heaven, to be elevated in his moral nature, and exalted in his intellectual faculties, you will be found in this contest in its every form, on the side of man and of woman, against the dominion of money and the ascendancy of wealth. Around you will gather the poor and the humble, the sons and daughters of industry, they whose labor makes this world all that it is, they who ask but little and have not much, they who seek no wrong and only would not be wronged, they who love freedom and only wish the privilege of enjoying what they earn—these, the wide mass of every community, these will be around you and with you ; and it is for them now, and in all future time, for their countless millions, that you must stand forth as defender, advocate, and friend. Believe me, that no cause can be better, no service nobler ; in life, it will be your proudest honor, and at death, you will go down to a grave bedewed and consecrated by the tears of the lowly and the poor, the widow and the orphan.

Another duty which seems to me severely incumbent on educated men, at the present time, shall conclude the discourse which I have already extended too far. Men of talents and education, they who occupy the foreground of society, ought to exhibit the best examples of integrity and high general moral excellence. God endows them, and men permit them to enjoy these eminent distinctions for

the good that it will do to the world, and as the means to effect that good, it is right to exact such examples from them. I cannot sanction a sentiment which we sometimes hear promulged, and more frequently observe acted in society, that the possession of high talents and great attainments, exempts their possessors from the common duties of common life, and acquits them of censure for delinquences and offences, which would disgrace ordinary individuals. I would hold them to a severer discipline and a more rigid accountability, for their influence, whether pernicious or beneficial, is too extensive and effective to admit of any such allowance.

And thus much of the general obligation you are under as to your moral bearing. The particular duty that I would now inculcate and impress on your hearts, is this ; that when you go from these halls, and enter upon the world, you will do so with a firm determination to be honest men, to pay your debts, to live within your means, and to provide a competency for your own wants.

The aristocracy of the old world pillage the people by force, or by the forms of the law. They openly claim a right to an easy and abundant subsistence from the earnings of others, and they frankly and above-board employ the authority and power to obtain and enjoy it. We condemn this, but we have a meaner aristocracy, a mushroom tribe, who plunder a livelihood from others by arts and practices not less culpable, and still more contemptible. Where in this wide Union of ours, may you look abroad that you do not behold scores of men living and who have long lived in flush abundance, beyond the style of nineteenth of the population about them, and who yet never earned a dollar, never had a dollar, and never spent a dol-

lar, which did not justly belong to some one else; men who live in comfort and luxury, and operate in easy business, or some indolent apology for none at all, while their much-wronged creditors, with their families, go unpaid, and often unclothed and unfed. I know that many an honest man is unfortunate and cannot pay his debts. God forbid that I should add one pang to his sorrow, or a feather's weight to his misfortunes. Such men I would not, I do not censure, and such men I cannot harm; for the sympathy and confidence of those who know them, will shield them from reproof, and defend them from the animadversions that I would apply to those only who deserve them. But what I mean to assail, and to warn you to avoid and to oppose, is, that too prevalent evil of our land—the laxity and licentiousness with which men fail and omit to make payment of their debts, and then pass on through life in apparent repute and estimation, as if no such thing had ever happened. The tone of public sentiment on this subject, has run down too low, and it should be restored and elevated. A man's standing ought to be affected by his insolvency, unless it clearly occurred without his fault. The reckless career of too many amongst us, of young men who enter upon large business destitute of capital, capacity and conduct, and dash on in extravagance and desperation, at the expense of whom it may concern, until they explode in an *honorable* assignment to and for some kindred genius, and then renew and repeat the same career of folly, fraud and prodigality throughout their lives, is not consistent with morals, or compatible with the public good. We can impose no restraint on this evil but public opinion, and that is abundantly sufficient, if it is properly awakened and renovated to the subject.

It is time that the moral feelings of society moved in this matter, and you can do no better service to your country than to set your lives, and actions, and influence and example, against this enormous abuse. I am well aware, that, by uttering these sentiments, I shall incur much censure from those who fall within their reproof. But I have not come here to gain their favor or applause. I stand here to address men younger than myself—to give them some advice as they are preparing to embark in the world; and I feel a responsibility to truth and to them, from which I must not shrink. I dare not dissemble or deceive them, for I know that at their entrance upon manhood, the first and most pressing temptation to assail them, will be the seductive allurements to adventure and speculation, which these moral harpies will spread before them, and the next, that easy indulgence which a mistaken public feeling extends to all who become insolvent, whether by unforeseen calamity, or by that plain and palpable perdition, which awaits all who run the career of hazard, extravagance and folly, which we believe is neither honorable nor honest. Had these principles and opinions been inculcated by parents and preceptors, and then sustained and enforced by social approbation as they so well deserve to be, more than a moiety of the young men whom within the last ten years we have seen wrecked in their fortunes, if not ruined in their morals, and blasted with infamy, would have now been prosperous in circumstances, honorable and useful in all the relations of life. Yes, the victims of that very fate from which I would rescue you, they, even they, in the midst of their misfortunes, humiliation and shame, will vindicate the propriety of these admonitions, and deplore that they did not themselves seasonably have and heed such advice.

When society permits men to provide for themselves, and to accumulate such property as they can lawfully acquire, that very permission creates a duty, and binds each to work out his own subsistence without any infringement of the same privilege in others. Men are made equal in this chance of accumulation, and it is against all the principles of equal rights, for any one man to take from another what belongs to him ; and they who live on others, whether by force or fraud, by the pretence of business and position, or any other cheating, violate the fast foundations of all society, and ought not to be accounted reputable within it. Educated and professional men are apt to fancy that they must support a certain style in life, whatever may be their income, and it is but too common to see them reckless and indifferent to every thing like probity and independence in their pecuniary affairs. I advise you to take the opposite course, to make it your first object to live within your means, and your next to amass some property. No matter if your income be small, still live within it, and lay up something. A man who cannot save something out of a small income, never will do it out of a large one. It is of no moment that you can save only a trifle, for it is not the amount that you begin with or can then save, that is any thing, but the art, the secret, the ability to do it, and the habit of doing it, this is the important matter, the thing that will be of value to you and facilitate and insure your future success, when you can save that which will be worth possessing. I do not care to have you grow into great wealth, for that is neither a benefit nor a blessing to any man, but I am anxious to impress you with the importance of securing a competence, a reasonable independence, for without it the

temptations, trials and exigencies of life may impair your integrity, usefulness and honor. If he be dishonest who does wrong to supply his wants, he must be twice a knave who will do it to add to his abundance.

Indebtedness is bondage, and the man who allows himself to incur obligations that he cannot pay, to live on at the expense and loss of others, or to risk what he cannot lose, must be so dormant in his moral sense that he is dangerous to himself and others. The course that I have recommended you to pursue will do more than to benefit yourselves, for it will lead you into those habits, manners and principles which lie at the foundation of all private and public welfare ; it will make you patterns and examples of probity, prudence and propriety in your respective communities, and it will conciliate and reconcile and attach those who cannot have the advantages which you have possessed to that cause of education, which shall through you requite to the mass of men a benignant and beneficial return for allowance, encouragement and sanction, and it will show to the world that education is not and need not be hostile, but may be, and through you is of service to the whole and not to you only, but to others and to all. Rely upon it that the plain and every day virtues and excellencies of life make up all that is most valuable in the world. Talent, education, manners, fashion, elegance, magnificence may and do adorn and grace these homely traits, but without the sterling and standard attributes of character, they are a nuisance and a curse. You as educated and elevated men must cast your influence where it can do most good, and thus repay to the world an adequate and an honest recompense for the blessings and benefits, the privileges and advantages which Providence and society have bestowed upon you.

But I must close. Perhaps you will think that the discourse I have now made to you, runs far and wide from the usual line of such occasions. It may be that it does, and should it be rightly censurable in this respect, I still trust that it may prove in the end a source of advantage and usefulness to you. As you perceive, I have not said one word to elevate you in your own opinions—one syllable to exalt you in your pride of heart, to make you feel yourselves above and far distant from your fellow men. But I have sought to open to you some views of your nature, your duty and your destiny, which might lead you to reflections and thoughts of your own, more beneficial to you than any thing that I could say. I have spoken for humanity; I have vindicated the rights of man; I have connected our institutions and principles as a people with their great original, the religion of our God; of that Deity, who made man in his own image. I have tried to show you your place and part in the great drama of life, upon which you are so soon to enter. I have studied to impress you with a full sense of your obligations as men and as Americans, as freemen and as christians. I have delineated your duty. I have made your career no path of ease and sure success; but one, as you will find it, of doubt, difficulty and danger, wherein, however, if a man do not achieve prosperity, he may at least deserve it. Go, then, into that world, and upon those duties, and take with you this advice and admonition from him who has preceded you only a few years, and who has in his experience found but this one conviction and conclusion to tell you, that the right, the just, the true, the honest, the benevolent, the good, are more and mightier, wiser and worthier, than the great, or the glorious; and are, after all, all and the only objects worthy of the regard of an immortal nature.



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